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ABSTRACT

This review of eligibility criteria for students with special needs was the result of a 2-month analysis of the Massachusetts special education law and the current state of education within Massachusetts. The review was intended to examine the original intent of the special education statute, possible reasons for the high number of special education students, costs to the state of the current special education mandates, and the cost savings to be achieved by recommended changes. The following recommendations were made: (1) the statutory definition of a child with special needs should be rewritten; (2) statewide eligibility guidelines must be developed to ensure clarity and consistency across school districts; (3) a comprehensive training program for professionals and parents should be developed to ensure understanding of the new definition and its implementation; (4) a 5-year initiative should be instituted to establish Teacher Support Teams to implement a prereferral system and instructional accommodations within regular classrooms; (5) all professional staff should participate in a professional development program that emphasizes key areas of effective instruction; and (6) a discretionary grant program supporting the mainstreaming of students with special needs should be funded. A bibliography of 49 items and seven appendixes presenting more detailed data on which the report is based conclude the document. (DB)

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Section 78 of Chapter 138 of the Acts of 1991

A REVIEW OF THE ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

AUGUST 1991

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ERRATA SHEET

PROJECTED SAVINGS IN EVALUATION AND EXCESS COSTS
TABLE 5 REVISED SEPTEMBER 1991
1989-1990 DATA

There was a mathematical error in Table 5 of this report (page 16). The attached table contains the corrected data relevant to the projected savings in evaluation and excess costs that would be achieved with a reduction in the percentage of the public school population enrolled in special education. The reader is advised that the savings listed on pages of 15 and 16 of this report should be disregarded and that the correct data are in the following table.

Percent of Reduction	Number of Students	Evaluation Costs	Excess Costs	Total Savings
	836,189 public school students			
	143,373 sp.ed.students= 17.1% of public school enrollment			
1% reduction	-8,362 students = 16.1% of public school enrollment	$11,706,800	$13,897,644	$11,706,800 $13,897,644 $ 25,604,444
2% reduction	-16,724 students = 15.1% of public school enrollment	23,413,600	27,795,288	23,413,600 27,795,288 51,208,888
3% reduction	-25,806 students= 14.1% of public school enrollment	35,120,400	41,692,932	35,120,400 41,692,932 76,813,332
4% reduction	-33,448 students = 13.1% of public school enrollment	46,827,200	55,590,576	46,827,200 55,590,576 102,417,776
5% reduction	-41,810 students = 12.1% of public school enrollment	58,534,000	69,488,220	58,534,000 69,488,220 128,022,220

In calculating the cost savings associated with the projected reductions of students enrolled in special education, two estimates were used. First, the average cost of a TEAM evaluation of $1400 per student was multiplied by the anticipated number of students who would not be referred to special education if the population was reduced by 1%-5% of the total public school population. The projected savings in this category are listed in the third column.

Second, in calculating the potential savings in excess costs*, a conservative estimate was used. It is anticipated that most of the reduction in the special education enrollment would occur in the 502.1 and 502.2 prototypes **. Therefore the average ($1662) of the excess cost of a 502.1 placement ($1430) and the excess cost of a 502.2 placement($1894) was obtained and multiplied by the number of students who would not receive special education services if there was a reduction of 1%-5% of the public school population enrolled in special education. The projected savings in excess costs are listed in column four.

The projected total savings were reached by combining the savings in evaluation costs with the savings in excess costs. These totals can be found in the fifth column. It is important to note that this analysis does not take into account projected growth in the school age population, inflation, or loss of federal special education funds.

* Excess costs refer to the cost of educating students in special education that exceed per pupil cost. The excess cost for students with special needs will vary according to the amount of time the student receives special education services; those students who receive greater amounts of special education are more costly to service.

** Students in the 502.1 prototype spend 100% of the school day in the regular education setting, where they receive modified instruction coordinated by the classroom and special education teachers. Students in the 502.2 prototype receive special education services for up to 25% of the school day

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This review of eligibility criteria for students with special needs was the result of a two month analysis of Chapter 71B, the Massachusetts special education law, and the state of education within the Commonwealth.

Dr. Mary-Beth Fafard, Associate Commissioner for Special Education, and Dr. Elizabeth Twomey, Associate Commissioner for School Programs, provided the leadership and overall responsibility for the report.

Alice Donahue and Shelley Gross, Educational Consultants to the Department of Education, were the primary authors of the report.

Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel, and Dianne Curran, Esq., Department of Education Legal Office, provided legal assistance throughout the project.

Many thanks are extended to the Focus Reaction Group and Department of Education employees who provided input on the issue of eligibility and assistance with the recommendations.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA REVIEW

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA REVIEW

The Department of Education was mandated by section 78 of Chapter 138 of the Acts of 1991 to conduct a review of the eligibility criteria for children with special needs. The review was conducted, in part, to examine the original intent of the special education statute, the reasons for the high number of special education students in the Commonwealth, the costs to the Commonwealth of the current special education mandates, and the cost savings to be achieved by implementing recommended changes.

The review consisted of a number of components: an analysis of current special education data regarding enrollment; an analysis of information gained from interviews with a variety of individuals who were involved with the original framing of the law; discussions with a Focus Reaction Group to provide input and feedback; a review of literature regarding factors contributing to special education enrollment; and a discussion of findings and recommendations with the Board of Education. It is the intention of the Board of Education to file legislation in support of these recommendations.

The eligibility review was premised upon the commitment to preserve the non-categorical nature of Chapter 71 B and thus continue to avoid the harmful and stigmatizing labeling of students. Early in the review process it became apparent that change in statutory definition alone would not reverse the trend in special education growth.

Adequate fiscal resources must be provided to strengthen the educational system's capacity to meet the learning needs of all students. Therefore, this review recommends the following:

1. The statutory definition of who is a school age child with special needs should be rewritten, as well as the Chapter 766 Regulations, to ensure that students with disabilities are appropriately identified.

2. Statewide eligibility guidelines must be developed to ensure clarity and consistency of application of the special education statute across local school districts.

3. Upon developing eligibility guidelines for the new statutory definition, the Department should design and implement a comprehensive training program for professionals and parents to ensure understanding of the definition and the process for implementation.

4. A five year initiative to establish Teacher Support Teams in every school building to guarantee the implementation of a prereferral system and the delivery of appropriate instructional accommodations within the regular education classroom should be instituted.

5. All professional staff, preschool through high school, should be required to participate in a professional development program that emphasizes four key areas: the belief that all children can learn; the ability to adapt curriculum, materials, and instructional practice to meet the needs of diverse learners; the application of effective behavior management skills; and the capacity to consult/collaborate with colleagues in order to address diverse learner needs. This training initiative should be implemented over a five year period.

6. A discretionary grant program supporting the mainstreaming of students with special needs should be developed and funded.

Growth in the enrollment in special education is symptomatic of a number of complex factors. Therefore, reversing the trend of yearly increases in special education enrollment will not be simple or easily accomplished. The approach needed to reverse this pattern is complex, and requires ongoing resources, energy, and attention.

BACKGROUND

Pursuant to the requirements of section 78 of Chapter 138 of the Acts of 1991, the Department of Education is authorized and directed to conduct a review of of the eligibility criteria for children with special needs. The following excerpt from section 78 describes the scope of the review:

> ...for the purpose of tightening said requirements. Said review shall include, but not be limited to, an examination of the original intent of the special education statute, the reasons for the high number of special education students in the commonwealth, the costs to the commonwealth of the current special education mandates, and the cost savings to be achieved by implementing recommended changes.

This report is designed to fulfill this legislative requirement. Given the timeframe, the Department engaged in the following process:

* reviewed current federal and state law with respect to definition (see Appendix A)
* reviewed current special education data regarding enrollment
* interviewed a variety of individuals who were involved with the framing of the law
* convened a Focus Reaction Group (see Appendix B) composed of a variety of constituents to provide input and feedback
* reviewed literature regarding factors contributing to special education enrollment
* discussed the report's findings and recommendations with the Board of Education

The report addresses the areas outlined in section 78. The focus is on eligibility for special education services. It is not the intent of this report to present a comprehensive analysis of special education. The issues of mainstreaming/integration and teacher certification will be contained in a future report. (Note: Section 79 of Chapter 138 of the Acts of 1991 requires a separate report on these issues due to the Legislature by October 1, 1991.)

It is the Department's belief that the recommendations put forth in this report, when implemented, will begin to reverse the trend of over-reliance on a special education delivery system to meet the needs of diverse learners.

ENROLLMENT DATA

During the past several years there has been increasing national and state concern raised regarding the growth in enrollment and the increasing costs of special education. The statewide cost of special education for Fiscal Year 90 is contained in Appendix C. The State Auditor's Report on Special Education in Massachusetts provides a detailed discussion of these costs and the consequences of these expenditures (March 1991). An analysis of special education enrollment data indicates the number of students receiving special education services has steadily increased since 1974, the year Chapter 71B was implemented. Table 1 reflects continued growth in special education through the 1990-1991 school year.

It is noteworthy that the percentage of students receiving special education steadily increased while the general school population declined. The data represented in Table 2 reflect some interesting trends in student placement ,i.e., prototype. For example, the number of students enrolled in private residential schools has declined while the number of students receiving special education services for part of the school day has more than doubled since 1974. The largest increase in student placements occurred in full-time special classes, where the number of students placed in special classes has increased by 400 %, from 7,172 to 27,406, since 1974. This trend has led advocates and practitioners to call for increased planning and program development to promote student mainstreaming and integration.

When the Massachusetts public school enrollment data is compared to that of other states, it is apparent that at 16.4%(1987-1988 enrollment data), a higher proportion of students are enrolled in special education in Massachusetts than in other states (see Appendix D). Originally, federal legislation utilized census data, predicting 12% of the student population would need special education services. This prediction appears to be the only reflection of anticipated need during the time that the special education law was first conceived. Possible reasons for this growth and recommendations for addressing it are discussed in the following sections.

SPECIAL EDUCATION COMPARED TO PUBLIC SCHOOL AND TOTAL SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY HEADCOUNT (OCTOBER 1)

School Year	Special Education Enrollment (3 - 21)	Public School Enrollment (K - 12)	Special Education Percentage of Public School Enrollment	Total School Enrollment (Public and Non-Public K - 12)	Special Education Percentage of Total School Enrollment
1974 - 75	81,314	1,202,672	6.8%	1,366,468	6%
1975 - 76	98,566	1,188,035	8.3%	1,339,508	7.4%
1976 - 77	110,664	1,161,003	9.5%	1,307,142	8.5%
1977 - 78	124,754	1,123,742	11.1%	*	---
1978 - 79	129,174	1,094,007	11.8%	1,231,949	10.5%
1979 - 80	132,875	1,049,809	12.6%	*	---
1980 - 81	135,739	1,011,933	13.4%	1,151,058	11.8%
1981 - 82	130,787	958,916	13.6%	1,105,307	11.9%
1982 - 83	130,028	920,114	14.1%	1,068,704	12.2%
1983 - 84	130,115	890,050	14.6%	1,041,701	12.5%
1984 - 85	131,864	870,442	15.1%	1,020,188	13%
1985 - 86	133,611	854,603	15.6%	1,003,402	13.3%
1986 - 87	135,411	844,300	16.0%	990,867	13.7%
1987 - 88	137,760	836,075	16.4%	975,127	14.1%
1988 - 89	140,326	833,970	16.8%	968,704	14.5%
1989 - 90	143,373	836,189	17.1%	961,775	15%
1990 - 91	143,685	844,848	17.0%	**	---

* INCOMPLETE DATA
** NOT AVAILABLE

TABLE II

PROTOTYPE ENROLLMENTS BY HEADCOUNT (October 1): 1974 - 75 to 1990 - 91								
SCHOOL YEAR	502.1	502.2	502.3	502.4	502.5	502.6	502.7	502.8
1974 - 75	28,669	34,655	6,369	7,172	1,366	2,231	349	493
1975 - 76	19,092	56,407	9,119	9,170	1,563	2,266	410	539
1976 - 77	15,870	63,637	11,322	12,508	3,244	2,193	732	1,158
1977 - 78	11,091	77,490	13,154	14,098	4,265	2,027	1,097	1,541
1978 - 79	10,307	80,451	14,723	15,720	4,463	2,007	1,008	1,586
1979 - 80	10,781	81,168	15,250	17,385	4,506	1,848	1,014	1,975
1980 - 81	10,501	80,405	16,132	19,747	4,736	1,706	1,124	2,358
1981 - 82	10,753	75,271	16,647	20,195	4,046	1,358	835	2,726
1982 - 83	10,549	72,464	17,342	22,052	3,755	1,042	851	2,854
1983 - 84	10,715	70,853	18,209	22,615	3,798	847	882	3,006
1984 - 85	11,049	70,269	18,661	23,990	3,767	743	953	3,259
1985 - 86	11,100	69,396	19,010	25,118	3,882	697	908	3,500
1986 - 87	11,766	68,142	19,408	26,262	3,899	673	1,090	4,161
1987 - 88	12,081	67,704	19,978	27,327	4,220	738	1,058	4,654
1988 - 89	12,786	67,699	20,968	27,819	4,223	845	763	5,223
1989 - 90	13,462	68,516	21,287	28,432	4,286	870	789	5,731
1990 - 91	14,688	68,751	21,217	27,406	4,129	877	770	5,847

HISTORICAL INTENT OF CHAPTER 71B

In July 1972, Governor Francis Sargent signed into law Chapter 766 of the Acts of 1972, a bill guaranteeing an education for all school age children with special needs. The Governor said, "Our goal must be to give parents the greatest choice in selecting the best means for meeting their children's needs. This bill represents an important step in allowing the Commonwealth to meet the needs of all the parents and children of Massachusetts." (Governor's Press Release #2/JY/35)

The Governor's statement provides one view on what the intent of the law was. After review of relevant documents both before and after the 1972 enactment of what became Chapter 71B of the Massachusetts General Laws, as well as interviews with key policy makers and advocates who worked for its passage (see Appendix E), a picture emerges of why key provisions, including the definition of who is a school age child with special needs, were written into law.

The preamble to the law (see Appendix F) is instructive in indicating legislative intent: "The act is designed to remedy past inadequacies and inequities by defining the needs of children requiring special education in a broad and flexible manner, leaving it to state agencies to provide more detailed definitions...." This language is reflective of the limited educational opportunities available in Massachusetts prior to enactment of Chapter 71B. There were numerous statutes governing the provision and payment of special education services for ten different categories of special needs. Such a categorical bureaucracy did serve some students well but resulted in the denial of equal educational opportunities for other students who received inadequate or inappropriate special education services.

The issue of equal educational opportunity was a national concern in the early 1970s. Two landmark cases, Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania (PARC) and Mills v. Board of Education of District of Columbia extended the concept of equal educational opportunity to students with disabilities. Subsequently, lawsuits

were filed across the country that resulted in a re-examination of eligibility standards for special education. The end result was the passage of federal law, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, P.L. 94-142, in 1975.

Thus, in an atmosphere of heightened awareness of the effects of educational discrimination, Chapter 71B established its roots. The tenets of the legislation were the following:

- to serve the unserved and underserved, including students 3-5 and 18-21
- to eliminate categorical labels
- to provide programming within the least restrictive environment
- to encourage community-based rather than institutionally-based placements
- to replace a patchwork of state and locally funded programs
- to maximize educational opportunities for students with special needs
- to include parents in the decision making process
- to provide uniform funding
- to enable students with special needs to become independent members of society

Therefore, the primary purpose of Chapter 71B was to ensure that all students, regardless of ability, would receive appropriate educational services provided by the public schools. With this viewpoint in mind, the framers of Chapter 71B were anticipating the creation of an educational system designed to meet the diversity of all students' needs. As the law was implemented, however, there were growing concerns regarding costs, availability of program options in the least restrictive environment, identification of students, and the overall relationship of regular and special education.

STUDIES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION SINCE PASSAGE OF CHAPTER 766: 1974-1991

Special education has been studied extensively since its inception. Numerous task forces have been convened to bring suggestions and understanding to improve the special education system. Issues related to fiscal and population growth are among the primary concerns of policy makers and educators. Several constituent groups have made recommendations regarding mainstreaming (Out of the Mainstream,1987) and the need to define exit/entry criteria (The Condition of Special Education in Massachusetts,1990). Of particular interest to this study however, are three previous state studies that have analyzed aspects of the special education delivery system. Each study merits attention because each recommends solutions and directions to address the growing concerns regarding special education.

One of the earliest studies was funded by the Massachusetts Department of Education. Implementing Massachusetts' Special Education Law: A Statewide Assessment included in its 1982 recommendations the encouragement of a prereferral system; an emphasis on the need to train regular education teachers; and a statement that no tighter definition is needed even though special education needs are not defined clearly in the law and regulations.

Following this assessment was a report in 1986 by the Senate Committee on Post Audit and Oversight. This report, Special Education in Massachusetts: An Overview of Chapter 766 Program Funding and Service Delivery, called for the following recommendations and/or modifications of the special education delivery system: the establishment of clear criteria for what constitutes "special needs" for a child to be eligible for 766 services; the publication of distinct guidelines concerning the responsibilities of social and medical agencies and the regular education system in order to clearly define the special education domain; the provision of remedial speech services outside of special education; and the encouragement of the participation of students with special needs in the mainstream through the identification of

regular education program characteristics. The most recent report, The State Auditor's Report on Special Education in Massachusetts, was released in March of 1991 with a series of comprehensive recommendations for regular and special education.

The most significant recommendation in the State Auditor's report recognizes that the only long-term solution to concerns about the growth and cost of special education in the Commonwealth is to revitalize regular education. Specific recommendations include the development of a statewide Mainstreaming Plan; consideration of combining certification standards for regular education teachers and teachers of students with mild and moderate special needs; restoration of state funding for grants to conduct in-service teacher training and professional development activities for currently certified teachers; the amendment of the Chapter 766 Regulations to emphasize prereferral strategies; the reinvestment of fiscal resources by local school districts to enable the development of less costly special education programs; and the renewal of commitment by the Legislature and the Governor to fund key regular education support and remedial programs. The report concludes that if current enrollment and expenditure trends continue, there will "... be not only less adequate funding available to support public education in general, but a special education system that requires an increasing proportion of available education resources." (p.31)

These studies together indicate that improvements can be obtained if there is a reinvestment in the educational system and attention is given to developing strong prereferral systems, providing clear eligibility criteria, and implementing mainstreaming initiatives. While these studies contain many facts, they do not discuss in any detail the factors contributing to special education enrollment.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

There is extensive literature and research that focuses on the etiology and characteristics of particular disabling conditions. Limited information exists in the literature about factors that are known to contribute to the rising enrollment in special education. In preparing an analysis of the reasons contributing to the growth within Massachusetts, much information was gleaned from discussions with practitioners, parents and other constituency groups. A Focus Reaction Group along with Department of Education staff provided further clarification and understanding of the reasons contributing to the rising enrollment. Further, the literature on the prereferral process was examined as another source to explain growth in special education.

The factors that affect enrollment include those related to school environment, society, policy/legal process, and fiscal considerations. (Table 3 provides a brief listing of each of these factors.) Each of these factors is briefly described below.

Factors Within School Environment

A significant factor contributing to the rising enrollment in special education is the limited availability of a regular education support system that accommodates the learning needs of a diverse student population. Cuts in school budgets have forced school districts to significantly reduce regular education support services, thus reducing options for students experiencing difficulty in the classroom. While some districts provide special education to as few as 9.5% of their students, other school systems have as many as 34% of their students enrolled in special education (Department of Education, Special Education Program and Resource Indicators, 1990). In some communities, special education is the only service available to students with learning problems. Rather than allow those students who are in danger of school failure to fall behind their peers, school personnel, social service agencies, and/or parents refer them for special education services. Once students are referred for special education evaluation, there

TABLE 3

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE ENROLLMENT OF STUDENTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Factors Within School Environment

1. Limited regular education support services and instructional delivery options for a diverse student population.
2. Prescribed curriculum in regular education limits opportunities to individualize instruction; lack of continuity between regular and special education curriculum.
3. Nonexistent or ineffective prereferral process and strategies that accommodate learning differences.
4. Increasing class size and ineffective educational policies and practices, i.e., ability grouping, tracking, and grade retention fail to accommodate student diversity.
5. Untrained/undertrained school personnel unable to accommodate student diversity; lack of staff time for professional collaboration and problem solving.
6. An emphasis on standardized test data as the primary measure of student learning.

Factors Outside School Environment

1. Increasing number of children living in poverty.
2. Inadequate child care, health care, and housing opportunities.
3. Increases in domestic violence, substance abuse, and rates of preadolescent and adolescent suicide.
4. Increasing demands on the school due to changing demographics.
5. Advances in medical technology and interventions sustain children with disabilities over longer periods of time.

Factors Related to Policy/Legal Process

1. Inclusive nature of the definition of a school age child in need of special education and the lack of state eligibility guidelines.
2. Entitlement nature of special education legislation creates the perception that special education is more reliable and more prescribed for students and parents.
3. Court ordered and agency referrals for students in need of service.

Factors Related to Fiscal Considerations

1. Lack of adequate fiscal support for schools and ongoing staff development.
2. Perception of greater federal and state funding for students identified with special needs.
3. Lack of fiscal incentive for returning students to, or retaining students in, regular education programs.
4. Lack of fiscal support for social services within the school and community.

is a 75% likelihood that the referred student will be designated as a student with special needs (Graden,1985).

Components correlated with an inadequately supported regular education system include nonexistent or ineffective prereferral strategies; increasing class size; ineffective educational policies and practices, e.g., ability grouping, tracking, and grade retention, and untrained or undertrained school personnel. Each of these contribute to the rising referral rate for special education because the ability to accommodate learner diversity is severely limited. In addition, the lack of professional development opportunities for school professionals is of particular concern. While educational research has made significant inroads in understanding how children learn, that information is difficult to transfer to instructional practice without a substantial commitment to the ongoing professional development of educational personnel. Since budget constraints have severely curtailed staff development in most communities, teachers have limited access to the kind of technical assistance that would aid them in accommodating the needs of diverse learners.

The presence or absence of a prereferral system also contributes to the growth in the number of students served in special education. As recommendations in previous state studies note, a strong prereferral system ensures that regular education develops appropriate classroom accommodations for students in need of varied instructional strategies. In schools where Teacher Support Teams exist (see Appendix G) , the referral rate to special education has been reduced . According to studies conducted to measure the impact of prereferral activities on the referral rate, the range of reduction in referrals ranged from 63% to 15% (Lloyd, Crowley,Kohler,and Strain,1988; Graden,Casey,and Bonstrom,1985). These teams are most effective when time is made available during the school day for teachers to meet and problem solve, where there are adequate support services to access, and where the principal supports the process of collaboration and consultation. While not limited to the prereferral process, an effective Teacher Support Team serves both the needs of teachers seeking general support for classroom problems as well as the individual needs of students who may become the focus of

formal prereferral activities.

One of the reasons for the high referral rate cited by practitioners is the limited range of instructional options and classroom materials found in regular education's curriculum. For students capable of learning but in need of more individualization or varied instructional approaches, the curriculum itself can be a cause of school failure. In some school systems, teachers feel compelled to maintain high performance standards because teacher effectiveness is often measured by the performance of students on standardized achievement tests. Indeed, a student's poor performance on standardized tests is a commonly cited reason for referral to special education.

While not a direct influence on the referral rate to special education, the lack of continuity between regular and special education curriculum does limit opportunities for students with special needs to re-enter regular education programs. Consequently they are maintained in special education and contribute to the overall enrollment picture. The current reliance on pullout programs to serve students with special needs exacerbates this problem since students removed from the classroom for special education often miss instruction in other essential curriculum areas. Thus, students enrolled in special education for significant periods of time become victims of the curriculum gap between regular and special education and often need more restrictive special education placements.

Factors Outside School Environment

Societal factors that are clearly beyond the control of school personnel are another contributor to the rising rate of students enrolled in special education. Children who live in poverty, receive inadequate child or health care, or are part of dysfunctional family situations come to school at risk for school failure. These students often fall behind their peers in school achievement, not because they are incapable of learning, but because of the influence of these factors on their ability to negotiate the school environment. With cuts in social service programs, more of these children are receiving needed services through special education.

The effects of these influences can be seen particularly in large urban areas where significant numbers of "at risk" students reside.

Factors Related to Policy/Legal Process

One of the contributing factors identified by practitioners is the lack of a precise definition of who is a child with special needs. From a policy perspective, the definition of a child with special needs should not lead to the identification of children as disabled who are not, nor fail to identify children who are, in need of special education. While the original intent of the law was to remedy inequities in the treatment of students with disabilities, over time the policy has tended to allow for the inclusion of students who may not have a disability but are experiencing learning difficulties. In Massachusetts, the current definition of who is a student with special needs contains imprecise language and may lead to the over inclusion of students. In examining the current definition, the language "temporary or more permanent adjustment difficulties or attributes" can be applicable to many students who are experiencing problems in school but who are not disabled. The current definition does not clarify that special education exists to serve students with disabilities.

A more explicit definition with language subject to clear interpretation and accompanied by specific eligibility guidelines would assist school districts in making appropriate determinations regarding eligibility for special education. While other states have written eligibility guidelines to aid school districts in the interpretation of their special education laws, Massachusetts has not. This lack of eligibility guidelines compounds the uncertainty school districts must contend with as they implement the law. A change in the language of the definition, specifically eliminating ambiguous terminology and emphasizing the existence of a disability, will enable the Department to write eligibility guidelines that provide needed clarity in the determination of eligibility for special education. However, any statutory change should preserve the non-categorical nature of Chapter 71B to avoid the stigmatization and harmful labeling of students.

The legal entitlement afforded to students within the special education system supports the perception that special education services are more dependable and responsive to parental input and concern. The courts and social service agencies also rely on the entitlement nature of special education to ensure that students receive needed services.

Factors Related to Fiscal Considerations

The fiscal situation both directly and indirectly contributes to the practice of placing and retaining students in special education. As funding for regular education and support services drops, the capacity of regular education is eroded, and special education becomes the only source of assistance for students whose needs are not met in the regular classroom. Consequently, the lack of adequate fiscal support for all of education has contributed to the increased numbers of students in special education. The perception of greater federal and state funding for students identified with special needs coupled with a lack of incentives to return students to regular education has contributed to the fiscal burden on special education. The creation of a stable and equitable fiscal base for the funding of education is being called for by members of the business community, educators, and parents, e.g., Every Child A Winner!, a 1991 proposal for legislative action by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education.

Summary

The growing enrollment in special education is a consequence of the complex interaction among the identified factors. Further, the dwindling resources available to public schools has limited the availability of instructional alternatives other than special education for an increasingly diverse student population. Therefore, the reversal of the trend of yearly increases in special education will not be simple and quick to implement . The approach needed to reverse this pattern is complex, and requires ongoing resources, energy, and attention. The following recommendations reflect such an approach.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA REVIEW

RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Recommendations Pertaining to the Identification of Students

The original intention behind the definition in Chapter 71B, section 1 was to benefit those students who had historically been unserved or underserved. However, over time school systems have implemented the statute in a manner that has led to relatively high rates for placing/including students in special education. In order to address the high number of students receiving special education, the following recommendations are made.

1. The language contained in Chapter 71B, section 1 should be rewritten to ensure that only students with disabilities are included. The intention of this amendment is to eliminate previous language,e.g., temporary adjustment difficulties, because that term lacks clarity and precision and may have contributed to overly high placement rates. The following language is proposed:

   "School age child with special needs", A school age child who, because of a disability consisting of a developmental delay or an intellectual, sensory, neurological, emotional, communication, physical, specific learning or health impairment or combination thereof, is unable to progress effectively in regular education and requires special education services in order to successfully develop the child's individual educational potential; provided, however, that no child shall be determined to be a student with special needs solely because the child's behavior violates the school's disciplinary code, and provided that use of the word disability in this section shall not be used to provide a basis for labeling or stigmatizing the child or defining the needs of the child, and shall in no way limit the services, program, and integration opportunities provided to the child.

2. Statewide eligibility guidelines and appropriate regulatory changes must be developed to ensure clarity and consistency of application of the special education statute in local school districts. If the Legislature accepts recommendation 1 and amends the statute, the Department of Education must develop statewide eligibility guidelines and appropriate regulatory changes to ensure statewide consistency in the application of the special education statute. In developing guidelines, the Department would provide opportunities for educators, parents, and other interested constituents to participate and comment. The Department anticipates that the guidelines will be operational for one year prior to the amendment of the regulations.

3. Upon developing eligibility guidelines for the new statutory definition, the Department should design and implement a comprehensive training program for professionals and parents to ensure understanding of the definition and the process for implementation.

B. Recommendations Pertaining to the Educational System

Changes in statutory and regulatory language and the development of eligibility guidelines will not reverse the reliance on special education to meet the needs of diverse learners in schools. The implementation of the prereferral process and the right to accommodations

for diverse learners in regular education must be ensured without limiting parental access to special education. Therefore, the following recommendations are made.

4. Teacher Support Teams should be established in every school building to guarantee the implementation of a prereferral system and the delivery of appropriate instructional accommodations within the regular education classroom. The literature provides ample documentation of the effectiveness of Teacher Support Teams as an appropriate structure for prereferral activities that will reduce the number of students referred for special education(Lloyd, etc.).

   It is important to note that Chapter 71B, section 2 was recently amended to include prereferral language. The new language requires the principal to be responsible for ensuring that all efforts to accommodate the individual needs of students have been made in regular education prior to referral for special education. In addition, the newly promulgated Chapter 766 Regulations reflects the statutory change.

5. All regular and special education professional staff, preschool through high school, should be required to participate in a professional development program that emphasizes the following areas:
   a. The belief that all children can learn.
   b. The ability to adapt curriculum, materials, and instructional practice to meet the needs of diverse learners.
   c. The application of effective behavior management skills.
   d. The capacity to consult/collaborate with colleagues in order to address diverse learner needs.

6. A specific discretionary grant program to support the mainstreaming of students with special needs should be developed and funded. This grant was a provision in H.118, a Board of Education 1991 proposal, and would enable more students with identified special needs to be educated within the regular education setting.

   The Legislature recently strengthened the emphasis on mainstreaming in Chapter 71B, section 1 to ensure the provision of special education services within the least restrictive environment. In order for school districts to develop and implement integrated programs, support is needed.

The cost savings and costs associated with these recommendations are included in the following sections.

PROJECTED COST OF IMPLEMENTING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **Change In Statutory Language**
   No cost increases are anticipated. Cost savings are anticipated over time as fewer children would require special education services. For projected cost savings see Table 5 and accompanying explanation.

2. **Eligibility Guidelines and Appropriate Regulatory Changes**
   Two FTE professionals would be required for this activity. The cost could be absorbed by utilizing federal discretionary special education funds and would result in no new cost to the Commonwealth.

3. **Comprehensive Training Program on Definition and Eligibility Guidelines Conducted by the Department of Education**
   Two FTE professionals would be required for this activity. The cost could be absorbed by utilizing federal discretionary funds and would result in no new cost to the Commonwealth.

4. **Teacher Support Teams**
   The Department estimates that the creation of Teacher Support Teams would have a start up cost of $2,500 per building. This figure represents the cost of expert consultation for training of newly developed Teacher Support Teams within each building. Based on the recommendation that elementary and middle schools be the initial focus of this activity, the total cost estimate is $3.7 million. (There are approximately 1485 elementary and middle schools in the Commonwealth.) If implemented over a five year period, the cost would be $740,000 per year.

5. **Professional Training Program**
   Federal discretionary special education funds could assist with this initiative. In order to strengthen the skills of regular and special education professionals at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, the Department recommends that training monies be distributed using the school improvement model, based on the student population in each district. By attaching $20 to each student enrolled in a district and earmarking those funds for retraining efforts, resources would be equitably distributed across the Commonwealth. The estimated cost for this effort is based on the 1990-1991 preschool-high school enrollment of 844,848 students and totals $16.9 million. Over a five year implementation period, the estimated cost is $3.4 million per year.

6. **Incentive Grant Program**
   The Department has cost estimated this grant program at $1.25 million per year over the next five years, with a total cost of $6.25 million. The grant would award twenty-five school districts $50,000 each for the purpose of integrating students with special needs into regular education. It would fund program planning and evaluation, staff and consultant salaries, and opportunities for training.

For more detailed information on projected costs see Table 4.

TABLE 4
1989-1990 DATA

PROJECTED COSTS OF RECOMMENDATIONS OVER FIVE YEARS

	Recommendation	Cost to DOE	Cost to State
Year 1	2(Guidelines)	$80,000	None
	4(Teacher Support)		740,000
	5(P.Training Program)		3,379,392
	6(Integration Grant)		1,250,000
Total		**80,000**	**5,369,392**
Year 2	3(Training)	80,000	None
	4(Teacher Support)		740,000
	5(P.Training Program)		3,379,392
	6(Integration Grant)		1,250,000
Total		**80,000**	**5,369,392**
Year 3	4(Teacher Support)		740,000
	5(P.Training Program)		3,379,392
	6(Integration Grant)		1,250,000
Total			**5,369,392**
Year 4	4(Teacher Support)		740,000
	5(P.Training Program)		3,379,392
	6(Integration Grant)		1,250,000
Total			**5,369,392**
Year 5	4(Teacher Support)		740,000
	5(P.Training Program)		3,379,392
	6(Integration Grant)		1,250,000
Total			**5,369,392**
		Cost to DOE	Cost to State
5 Year Total		**160,000**	**26,846,960**

PROJECTED COST SAVINGS FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION BY PERCENTAGE OF REDUCTION IN ENROLLMENT

Cost savings will accrue to the Commonwealth and school districts when special education enrollment is reduced.* They will not be achieved immediately and cannot be obtained without a significant reinvestment in the overall educational system to meet the diversity of student needs. If the recommendations contained in this document were implemented comprehensively, there could be reductions in the special education enrollment over time as well as a strengthened regular education system.

The following shows an analysis of a projected 1% to 5% reduction in the the 502.1 and 502.2 prototypes, the two placement categories that the Department anticipates may have the greatest reduction in enrollment.** Other prototypes may be affected but are not included in this analysis. Special education savings would accrue in two ways: through the elimination of special education evaluation costs and through the elimination of the excess cost of special education services. This simple analysis was done for demonstration purposes only.

Table 5 examines potential savings in evaluation costs and excess costs for a student reduction from 1% to 5%. According to a 1985 Division Resources Corporation study, the cost of an evaluation for special education is based on the national average cost of approximately $1,400. Excess per pupil costs, which vary according to prototype, is the differential between per pupil cost for regular education students and the per pupil cost of special education services. The excess per pupil cost for a 502.1 placement was $1,430 and $1,894 for a 502.2 placement for the 1989-1990 school year.

Thus, if the Commonwealth's special education population in 502.1 and 502.2 prototypes was reduced by 1%, the Department estimates a minimum statewide savings of $26,379,668 and for a reduction of 5% a savings of $131,898,340. This amount reflects state and local savings. Additionally, future savings would be higher based on decreases in other prototypes as mainstreaming and other initiatives develop (see recommendations in this report). Further

as The State Auditor's Report on Special Education Massachusetts notes, the cost of special education services has increased at a rate significantly higher than the rate of cost increase for regular education programs. From 1988 to 1989, special education costs increased by 18.5% (p.24). Therefore, the projected savings in evaluation and excess costs shown in Table 5 can be considered low estimates of projected savings.

*It should be noted that a decrease in special education enrollment will result in a decrease in federal funds. For Fiscal Year 1992 the Commonwealth received $398.69 per student enrolled in special education under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). This amount includes school district distribution and state administrative and discretionary resources.

**The two prototypes, 502.1 and 502.2 represent the students most likely to have been over-identified as students with special needs. Students in the 502.1 prototype spend 100% of their school day in regular education programs. Students in the 502.2 prototype spend 75% or more of their school day in the regular education classroom.

TABLE 5

PROJECTED SAVINGS IN EVALUATION AND EXCESS COSTS

1989-1990 DATA

Prototype	Percent of Reduction	Evaluation Cost	Excess Cost	Total Savings
502.1	1% - 1,346 students	$1,884,440	$ 1,924,780	$ 3,809,180
502.2	1% - 6,852	9,592,800	12,977,688	22,570,488
Total	8,198	11,477,240	14,902,468	26,379,668
502.1	2% - 2,692	3,768,800	3,849,560	7,618,360
502.2	2% - 13,704	19,185,600	25,955,376	45,140,976
Total	16,396	22,954,400	29,804,936	52,759,336
502.1	3% - 4,038	5,653,200	5,774,340	11,427,540
502.2	3% - 20,556	28,778,400	38,933,064	67,711,464
Total	24,594	34,431,600	44,707,404	79,139,004
502.1	4% - 5,384	7,537,600	7,699,120	15,236,720
502.2	4% - 27,408	38,371,200	51,910,752	90,281,952
Total	32,792	45,908,800	59,609,872	105,518,672
502.1	5% - 6,730	9,422,000	9,623,900	19,045,900
502.2	5% - 34,260	47,964,000	64,888,440	112,852,440
Total	40,990	57,386,000	74,512,340	131,898,340

This analysis does not take into account projected growth in the school age population, inflation, or loss of federal special education funds.

CONCLUSION

The suggested recommendations in this report were designed to redirect resources to regular education for the purpose of strengthening its capacity to meet the educational needs of an increasingly diverse student population. Until regular education has the ability to retain and/or take back students who experience difficulty with learning but who are not disabled, the projected reduction in the percentage of students enrolled in special education will not be attained. Therefore, the projected savings from a decreased enrollment in special education and the anticipated cost of the recommendations must be considered in conjunction with each other.

The commitment of resources to regular education will result in an educational system that is more efficient and responsive to the needs of all students. As the public school enrollment increases, it is imperative that needed resources remain accessible to the majority of the student population served by regular education. Such a system would ensure that special education services are preserved for those who are disabled.

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APPENDIX A

COMPARISON BETWEEN FEDERAL AND MASSACHUSETTS SPECIAL EDUCATION LAWS AND REGULATIONS

I. Child in Need of Special Education

Federal law:

"1) The term 'children with disabilities' means children - (A) with mental retardation, hearing impairments including deafness, speech or language impairments, visual impairments including blindness, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, other health impairments, or specific learning disabilities; and (B) who, by reason thereof need special education and related services."(20 U.S.C. s.1401 (a) (1))

State law:

"School age child with special needs, a school age child who, because of temporary or more permanent adjustment difficulties or attributes arising from intellectual, sensory, emotional, or physical factors, cerebral dysfunctions, perceptual factors or other specific learning disabilities or any combination thereof is unable to progress effectively in a regular school program and requires special classes, instruction periods, or other special education services in order successfully to develop his individual educational potential; provided, however, that no child shall be determined to be a school age child with special needs solely because the child's behavior violates the schools disciplinary code." (Chapter 71B, s.1, amended 1991)

II. Special Education

Federal law:

"The term 'special education' means specially designed instruction, at no cost to parents or guardians, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability including, "(A) instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions and in other settings; and "(B) instruction in physical education." (20 U.S.C. s.1401 (16))

State regulation:

"Special education - specially designed instruction at no cost to the parent(s) or guardian to meet the unique needs of a child in need of special education, including development of the child's educational potential. The term shall include: a) instruction conducted in the classroom, in the home, in hospitals and institutions, and in other settings; and b) instruction in physical education." (Chapter 766 Regulation 103.0, amended 1991)

III. Related Services

Federal law:

"The term related services means transportation, and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services (including speech pathology and audiology, psychological services, physical and occupational therapy, recreation, including therapeutic recreation and social work services, and medical and counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, except that such medical services shall be for diagnostic and evaluation purposes only) as may be required to assist a child with a disability to benefit from special education, and includes the early identification and assessment of disabling conditions in children." (20 U.S.C. s.1401 (17))

State regulation:

"Related services - transportation and such developmental, corrective, and other supportive services as are required to assist a child in need of special education to benefit from special education, including those services described in 503.0." (Chapter 766 Regulation 127.0, adopted 1991)

APPENDIX B

FOCUS REACTION GROUP

The Department convened a Focus Reaction Group to provide input and reaction to the recommendations being proposed. The following individuals served. The opinions in the report do not necessarily reflect the opinions of Focus Reaction Group members.

Cynthia Baribeau, State Advisory Commission for Special Education

Pat Blake, Federation for Children with Special Needs

Susan Cole, Massachusetts Advocacy Center

Dr. Gunnar Dybwad, Professor Emeritus of Human Development, Brandeis University

Mary French, Pupil Personnel Administrator, Andover Public Schools

Dr. Vida Gavin, Superintendent, Chatham Public Schools

Dr. George J. Hagerty, Associate Professor of Political Science, Stonehill College

Richard Howard, Disability Law Center

William Kelley, Senior Advisor, Boston Public Schools, Special Education West Zone

Kathrine LeTourneau, Director of Special Services, Randolph Public Schools

James Major, Massachusetts Association of Approved Private Schools

Richard McInerny, Special Education Director, Mohawk Trail Regional School

Katherine Messenger, Bureau of Parent, Child and Adolescent Health

Dr. Margaret Reed, Administrator of Special Education, Holliston Public Schools

Jan Safran, Special Education Administrator, Shrewsbury Public Schools

Preston Shaw, Principal, Shrewsbury Middle School, Shrewsbury Public Schools

Shirley Smith, Early Childhood Coordinator, Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

Paula St. James, Parent, Hingham

Elaine Tateronis, Principal, Mary D. Stone School, Auburn Public Schools

Jo Ann Watkins, Parent, Hingham

Maggie West, Special Education Teacher, Acushnet Public Schools

Martha Ziegler, Federation for Children with Special Needs

APPENDIX C

MASSACHUSETTS SPECIAL EDUCATION DATA
FEBRUARY 1991

I. FY'90 Enrollment and Cost Data and Sources of Funds for Special Education:

Enrollment and Cost Data

• Total public school enrollment	836, 189
• Number of students with special needs (3-21 year olds)	143, 373
• % of all students with special needs (3-21 year olds) per public school population	17.1%
• % of school age students with special needs (5-18 year olds) per public school population	16.2%
• Total expenditures for school districts for education	$4,860,646,641
• Total expenditures for school districts for special education	$ 878,903,779
• % of total education expenditures attributed to special education	18%

Sources of Funds for Special Education

$ 592,720,249	(local)	67 %
$ 244,093,072	(state)	28 %
$ 42,090,458	(federal)	5 %

II. FY'90 Bureau of Institutional Schools (B.I.S.) Expenditures

B.I.S. Account 7028-0031 funds students with special needs residing in the Department of Mental Retardation, Mental Health, Public Health, Youth Services and the County House of Correction facilities.

FY'90 budgeted state expenditures:	$9,500,000
Number of B.I.S. students served during FY'90:	2800
Average number of B.I.S. students served daily:	750
Number of program sites:	70

III. FY'90 Out of District Placements/Commonwealth Expenditures

1. Account 7061-0012 (60/40) funds 60% of the services for students with special needs attending private approved 766 residential schools (502.6 placement).

FY'90 budgeted state expenditures:	$27,041,527	(60% Commonwealth)
School district expenditures:	$18,027,684	(40% School District)
Number of 502.6 students served during FY'90:	870	

2. Account 7028-0302 funds 100% of tuition and transportation costs for 202.1(e) students (students with special needs who have no parent or guardian living in the Commonwealth) and C.750 students (students with special needs who prior to the implementation of Chapter 766 were receiving state funded special education services).

FY'90 budgeted state expenditures:	$6,190,361
Number of 202.1(e) students served during FY'90:	108
Number of 750 students served during FY'90:	54

IV. FY'89 Out of District Placements (502.5)/School District Expenditures

Students with special needs attending private approved 766 day schools (502.5 placement).

School district tuition expenditures:	$79,662,647
Average placement cost (excluding transportation):	$ 18,865
Number of 502.5 students:	4,223*

*Note: This includes approximately 1,000 students whose placements are cost shared between human services agencies and school districts.

IV. FY'90 Total School District Transportation Expenditures

Total education transportation expenditures:	$188,840,000 (4% of all school district education expenditures)
Special education transportation expenditures:	$ 73,848,000 (2% of all school district expenditures) (8% of all school district special education expenditures)
% of total education transportation expenditures attributed to special education transportation:	39%

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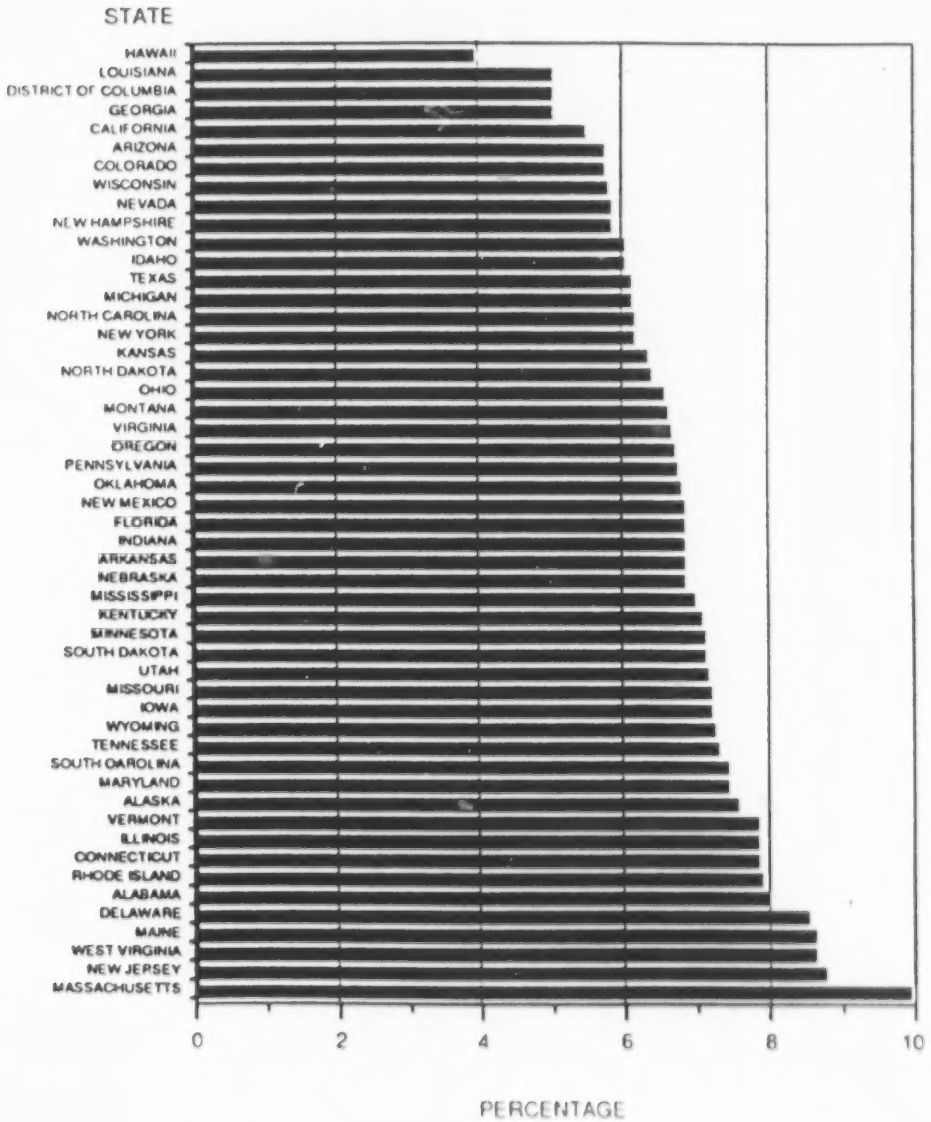
APPENDIX D

FIGURE 2

State-To-State Differences In Percentage Of Children Served Unde EHA-B And ECIA (SOP), School Year 1987-88



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APPENDIX E

STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL INTENT OF CHAPTER 71B

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The following people were contacted or interviewed in the gathering of information regarding the historical intent of Chapter 71B.

Frederick Andelman, Director, Division of Professional Development, Massachusetts Teachers Association

Dr. Gregory Anrig, former Massachusetts Commissioner of Education; President, Educational Testing Services

Robert K. Crabtree, Esq., former Research Director Joint Education Committee

Michael Daly, former Representative and Chairman of the Joint Education Committee

David Bartley, President, Holyoke Community College; former Speaker of Massachusetts House of Representatives

Elaine Kistiakowsky, formerly affiliated with the League of Women Voters

Lawrence Kotin, Esq.

Martha Ziegler, Federation for Children with Special Needs

ACTS, 1972. — CHAP. 766.

Chap. 766. AN ACT FURTHER REGULATING PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN REQUIRING SPECIAL EDUCATION AND PROVIDING REIMBURSEMENT THEREFOR.

Be it enacted, etc., as follows:

SECTION 1. The General Court finds that past development of special education programs has resulted in a great variation of services to children with special needs with some children having a greater educational opportunity than others in less favored categories or environments. The General Court further finds that past methods of labeling and defining the needs of children have had a stigmatizing effect and have caused special education programs to be overly narrow and rigid, both in their content and their inclusion and exclusion policies.

In the light of the policy of the commonwealth to provide an adequate, publicly supported education to every child resident therein, it is the purpose of this act to provide for a flexible and uniform system of special education program opportunities for all children requiring special education; to provide a flexible and non-discriminatory system for identifying and evaluating the individual needs of children requiring special education; requiring evaluation of the needs of the child and adequacy of the special education program before placement and periodic evaluation of the benefit of the program to the child and the nature of the child's needs thereafter; and to prevent denials of equal educational opportunity on the basis of national origin, sex, economic status, race, religion, and physical or mental handicap in the provision of differential education services.

This act is designed to remedy past inadequacies and inequities by defining the needs of children requiring special education in a broad and flexible manner, leaving it to state agencies to provide more detailed definitions which recognize that such children have a variety of characteristics and needs, all of which must be considered if the educational potential of each child is to be realized; by providing the opportunity for a full range of special education programs for children requiring special education; by requiring that a program which holds out the promise of being special actually benefits children assigned thereto; and by replacing the present inadequate and anti-equalizing formula for distribution of state aid for special education programs with an equalizing one which encourages cities, towns and regional school districts to develop adequate special education programs within a reasonable period of time.

Recognizing that professional services and resources must be made available to cities, towns and regional school districts on a regional basis if this act is to be implemented successfully, and within a reasonable period of time, this act strengthens and regionalizes the division of special education in the department of education and provides for and urges meaningful cooperation among agencies concerned with children with special needs.

Recognizing, finally, that present inadequacies and inequities in the provision of special education services to children with special needs have resulted largely from a lack of significant parent and lay involvement in overseeing, evaluating and operating special education programs, this act is designed to build such involvement through the creation of regional and state advisory committees with significant powers and by specifying an accountable procedure for evaluating each child's special needs thoroughly before placement in a program and periodically thereafter.

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APPENDIX G

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUILDING BASED SUPPORT TEAM PROJECT UPDATE

August 1991

The Divisions of Special Education and School Programs have been engaged in a federally funded grant program to encourage the development of building based Teacher Support Teams for the past four and one-half years. These teams serve as problem-solving committees whose goal is to develop strategies to assist the regular classroom teacher in meeting the needs of all students and to reduce the number of unnecessary referrals to special education. They are comprised of other classroom teachers and appropriate staff members. Classroom teachers come to Teacher Support Teams for assistance with students who are having difficulties in academics or behavior. The Teacher Support Team brainstorms with the classroom teacher, generating possible techniques for assisting the student. The classroom teacher then implements the techniques and returns to the team to report on student progress.

The philosophy of the Teacher Support Team is that teachers and other professionals working together can resolve more problems than teachers working alone. The team approach of cooperative problem solving utilizes more fully the capabilities and skills of all school professionals. Those schools where Teacher Support Teams are given strong administrative support and a regularly scheduled meeting time are among the most successful.

In the past, schools have participated in the Teacher Support Team program for three years. They receive planning grants during the first year of involvement and additional funding for each of the following two years. The goal is to institutionalize the Teacher Support Team. Grant supported activities include a variety of ongoing staff development efforts including additional on-site staff training and the development of resource libraries. Further opportunities include visits to other schools that have Teacher Support Teams and attendance at conferences and workshops.

During the 1990-91 school year the following number of school buildings participated in the Building Based Support Team Project:

* 38 elementary schools
* 12 junior high schools
* 1 high school